

Summary Baseline Report of PLACE Assessment in Almaty, Kazakhstan

Local Investigator

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Date: 29 May 2003



Funded by USAID through the MEASURE Evaluation Project



Summary of Indicators from Assessment

Baseline Results from PLACE Assessments in Almaty, Kazakhstan Partners: USAID/CAR , MEASURE/Evalutaion Project at UNC, Center for the Study of Public Opinion, Almaty	
Characteristics	
Population	1.3 mln
Scope of Assessment	
City-wide assessment	Yes
Identification of areas or “units” of city and social sites within “units” where people meet new partners and/or drug injectors socialize	Yes
Mapping of sites	Yes
Characterization of sexual and injecting networks at sites	Yes
Characterization of overlaps of sexual and injecting networks	Yes
Identification of gaps in prevention programs	Yes
Step 1 Results from Focus Groups/In-Depth Interviews to Identify Areas of City Where People Go to Meet New Sexual Partners and Where IDUs can be Found	
Number of Focus Group Discussions held	8
Number of In-Depth interviews held with police and IDU	20
Number of areas identified	15
Step 2 Results from Key Informant Interviews Within Areas to Identify Specific Sites Where People Meet Sexual Partners or Where Drug Injectors Can be Found	
Days of key informant interviewing	6
Number of interviewers	20
Number of Key informant interviews	1200
Number of Key informant reports	4189
Number of sites reported in areas where KI interviewed	1656
Number of sites reported in other areas	2533
Number of unique sites reported in all areas	857
<u>Percent of Key Informants who:</u>	
Believe injecting drug use occurs in area	75%
Has seen syringes lying around in last 4 weeks in area	54%
Report sex workers solicit customers in area	44%
<u>Percent of sites reported where Key Informants believe:</u>	
People meet new sexual partners	61%
IDUs can be found	30%
Syringes can be found	29%
Where sex workers solicit customers	51%

Step 3 Results from Visits to Sites Identified by Key Informants in Step 2 Characteristics of Sites and Patrons of Sites as Reported by a “Knowledgeable Person” at the Site and from Interviewer Observation	
Total Number of Unique Sites Named by Key Informants	857
<i>Note: Criteria for excluding sites for site verification varied by city. Most were stairwells/roofs infrequently reported by key informants.</i>	418
Number of Sites Visited, Verified, Characterized	N=439
<u>% of sites where Knowledgeable Person reports that:</u>	
People meet new sexual partners at site	64.7
Injection drug users can be found at site	50.4
People meet new sexual partners <u>and</u> IDUs are at site	33.5
People meet new sexual partners <u>or</u> IDUs are at site	81.3
<u>Type of site (By observation):</u>	
• Bar/Café/Restaurant	25.3
• Night club/Disco/Casino	6.6
• Sauna	2.1
• Hotel	3.9
• Billiards, Game Club/Computer Club	1.8
• Dormitory, Private Apartment, Flat	7.5
• Basement, roof, stairwells, unused abandoned building,	2.5
• School, college, technical	7.5
• Street/waste/yard	23.9
<u>Activities Onsite (By interview):</u>	
• Beer	87.7
• Hard Alcohol	73.6
• Computer games	16.6
• Eating	70.4
• Dancing	33.3
• Striptease	4.8
<u>Sexual Partnerships Formed Onsite (By interview):</u>	
• Men meet women	63.1
• Women meet men	62.4
• Men meet men	4.8
• Someone facilitates partnership formation	8.7
• Sex workers solicit	26.9
<u>Percent of sites with Patrons who are (By interview):</u>	
• Male students	78.1
• Female students	78.4
• Men under age 18	61.3
• Women under age 18	63.3
• Male IDU's	44.9
• Female IDU's	29.8
<u>Perception of how common IDU is in area (By interview):</u>	
• Very common	25.5
• Somewhat common	26.4
• Not very common	38.0
• Does not occur	9.6
• Percent who have seen used syringes lying inside or outside sites	43.5
<u>Condoms and AIDS Prevention (mostly by interview):</u>	
• % where condoms never available past 12 months	64.7
• % where condoms seen on site (observation)	18.5
• % where condoms available within 10 minutes	87.7
• % where sites willing to sell condoms	41.9
• % that ever had HIV/AIDS prevention programs	10.7
• % willing to have AIDS prevention program	55.8

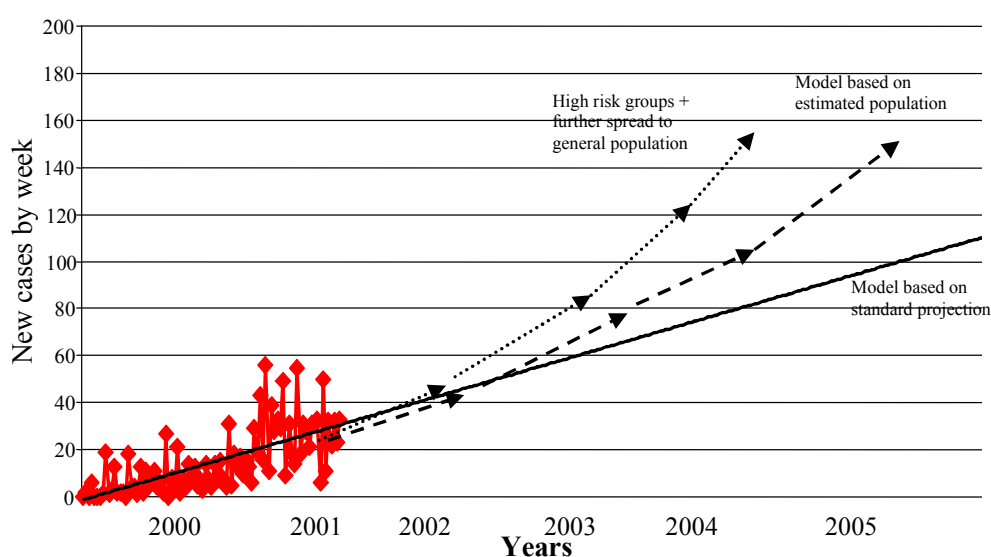
Step 4 Results from Interviews with People Socializing at Sites Where People Meet New Sexual Partners Characteristics of People at Sites				
	Rep Sample	Youth	CSWs / Clients	IDUs
Number of sites where interviews conducted	109			
Number of men interviewed	1109	607	282	236
Percent of Men (age 18 and older) Socializing at Sites Who:	%	%	%	%
• Are 18-24	49.2	90.0	50.4	61.4
• Are married or living in union	35.4	8.7	26.6	14.4
• Employed fulltime	55.2	37.9	54.3	14.8
• Are students	30.3	50.9	30.1	19.1
• Visit the site every day	31.7	30.6	25.2	38.6
• Believe people meet new sexual partners at site	71.5	76.1	84.0	67.4
• Have ever attracted a new sexual partner at the site	26.9	32.6	44.7	34.7
- Of those, used a condom with most recent partner from site	75.5	77.9	84.8	66.3
• Have a condom with them that was seen by interviewer	8.2	11.0	13.8	4.7
Rate of Partnerships:				
• Had a new sexual partner in the past 4 weeks	42.7	48.8	69.1	42.4
- Of those, used a condom with most recent new partner	77.8	81.8	87.1	71.0
• Had a new sexual partner in the past 12 months	71.0	79.2	89.4	69.1
• Have a current steady partner	74.3	62.9	69.1	66.9
• Have had sex with a man in the past four weeks	0.9	1.2	1.8	1.7
• Given money or gifts in exchange for sex in the past 3 months	24.1	23.9	100.0	17.8
Percent of Men Socializing at Sites Who:				
• Believe drug use is very common in area	13.5	11.0	15.6	32.2
• Believe that IDU's socialize at site of interview	56.3	56.8	63.8	97.9
• Have ever injected drugs	16.6	17.6	21.6	99.6
Of those who have injected drugs				
• Percent who shared a needle the last time he injected	--	--	--	26.7
Number of women interviewed	889	559	187	27
Percent of Women Socializing at Sites Who:				
• Are 18-24	57.8	91.9	71.7	29.6
• Are married or living in union	30.0	11.6	7.0	14.8
• Employed fulltime	43.1	33.6	25.1	18.5
• Are students	30.1	44.2	13.4	7.4
• Visit the site every day	29.4	24.5	29.4	55.6
• Believe people meet new sexual partners at site	73.8	80.5	96.8	81.5
• Have ever attracted a new sexual partner at the site	30.0	36.9	95.2	63.0
- Of those, used a condom with most recent partner from site	86.0	87.3	93.3	82.4
• Have a condom with them that was seen by interviewer	8.7	10.0	39.0	14.8
Rate of Partnerships:				
• Had a new sexual partner in the past 4 weeks	32.1	37.7	99.5	77.8
- Of those, used a condom with most recent new partner	90.5	91.5	97.9	85.7
• Had a new sexual partner in the past 12 months	47.7	53.7	100.0	92.6
• Have a current steady partner	67.6	57.2	51.3	81.5
• Received money or gifts in for sex in the past 3 months	20.6	25.6	100.0	59.3
Percent of Women Socializing at Sites Who:				
• Believe drug use is very common in area	13.4	10.4	19.3	59.3
• Believe that IDU's socialize at site of interview	54.8	52.8	74.9	92.6
• Have ever injected drugs	3.5	2.3	12.3	96.3
Of those who have injected drugs				
• Percent who shared a needle the last time she injected	--	--	--	25.9

Background and Objectives

A. The HIV epidemic in Kazakhstan

The incidence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in Kazakhstan increased between 2000 and 2001 (Figure 1). By December of 2001, Kazakhstan had reported a total of 2,000 cases. The actual number of cases is estimated to be 10 times higher.

Figure 1. HIV incidence rates in Kazakhstan, 2000-2005



Projection models based on weekly reports of HIV cases illustrate the potential explosion in the epidemic between 2000 and 2005 if the epidemic moves from the injecting drug user population to the general population (Figure 1). These models assume that there were 200,000 injection drug users in Kazakhstan in 2000 and that the prevalence of HIV infection among injection drug users was 18% during that year. If the epidemic spreads from injection drug users to the general population, there could be over 300 new cases of HIV per week by 2005 in Kazakhstan and 450,000 people infected. These projections illustrate the urgent need for HIV prevention interventions in Central Asia.

B. Priorities for Local AIDS Control Efforts (PLACE)

The PLACE method identifies areas likely to have a higher incidence of HIV and specific sites within these high transmission areas (HTAs) where AIDS prevention programs could reach those most likely to transmit infection. The PLACE method is appropriate for Central Asia because the epidemic is concentrated in certain geographic areas.

5 Steps of PLACE Method

- 1 Selection of assessment areas
- 2 Key informant interviews
- 3 Site visits
- 4 Interviews with people socializing at sites
- 5 Summary and recommendations

The first step in the PLACE Method is to identify HTAs using available demographic, socio-economic, and qualitative information. The second step is to ask key informants in each HTA to name places where injection drug users can be found and places where people meet new lovers, boyfriends, girlfriends or one night only sexual partners. The third step is to locate and describe all the sites named by key informants. The fourth step is to conduct interviews with people socializing at a sample of sites to learn about their demographic, social, and behavioral characteristics. The final step is to provide recommendations to intervention groups.

C. Objectives of the PLACE study in Almaty

The objectives of the PLACE study in Almaty were to:

- Identify sites where injection drug users socialize
- Identify sites where people, including commercial sex workers, meet new sexual partners
- Describe the social and behavioral characteristics of people at these sites
- Assess the extent that youth who visit these sites inject drugs and have new sexual partners
- Identify priority sites for HIV intervention programs
- Provide site-based indicators for monitoring of interventions

D. Organization of the PLACE study in Almaty

This study was conducted by the Center for the Study of Public Opinion in Almaty. USAID provided funding through The MEASURE *Evaluation* Project. Results were shared with USAID, PSI, the Soros Foundation, UNAIDS, the City AIDS Center, and other organizations.

Step 1: Identifying areas for assessment in Almaty

A. Objective

The objective of this step was to identify high transmission areas in Almaty.

B. Methods

Almaty is divided into 71 “police units” for administrative purposes. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted to identify which units were likely to be high transmission areas. Focus groups participants, including commercial sex workers, injection drug users, physicians, taxi drivers, and youth, were asked where people were most likely to go to meet new sexual partners, where sex workers were most likely to solicit clients, and where injection drug users were most likely to be found. In-depth interviews were also conducted to identify areas.

C. Results

The fifteen units most frequently mentioned by focus group participants and during the in-depth interviews were considered high transmission areas. For comparison, fifteen additional units were selected at random. The fifteen randomly selected units included five units identified by the focus groups. Twenty-five units throughout the city were therefore selected for the study.

Step 2: Key Informant Interviews

A. Objectives

The objective of this step was to identify all sites in the high transmission units and the randomly selected units where injecting drug users can be reached and where people meet new sexual partners.

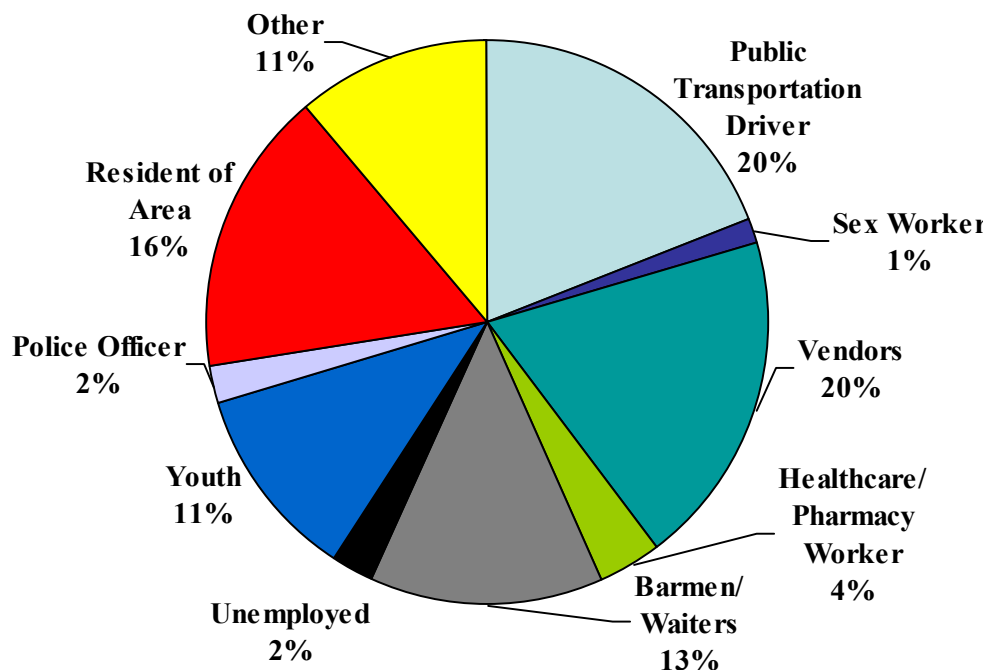
B. Methods

Key informants in each area were asked to name sites in the area where people meet new sexual partners, where sex workers solicit clients, or where injection drug users can be found. Key informant reports were compiled into a master list of sites.

C. Results

Twenty interviewers conducted 1200 key informant interviews in six days. On average, each informant named 3.5 sites. There were 4,189 site reports and 857 unique sites. Half of the key informants were male. Adults age 18 and older of all types were interviewed. Youth, vendors, public transportation drivers, barmen and waiters, and area residents were the most common types of key informants (Figure 2). Many more sites were named in units identified by the focus groups than in the randomly selected units.

Figure 2. Distribution of Key Informants by Type



Step 3: Site Visits

A. Objectives

The objective of this step was to describe the characteristics of sites named by key informants.

B. Methods

An interview team was assigned to each unit and given a list of sites inside the unit to visit and describe. There were so many reported sites (857) that it was not feasible to visit every site. Every site named by 5 or more key informants was visited, but flats, basements, roofs, and stairwells were not visited if they were named by less than 5 key informants. Sites located outside the study units were also not visited. The interview team obtained site coordinates using hand-held Geographic Positioning System (GPS) units. The team also questioned a responsible party at each site about characteristics of the site relevant to HIV prevention.

B. Results

Interviews were conducted at 439 sites meeting the eligibility criteria over a period of six days. Interviews were declined at 6 sites. The remainder of this section of the report describes the sites where interviews were completed.

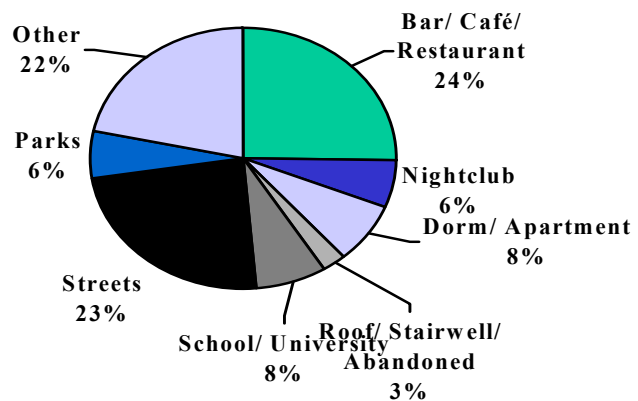
Site characteristics

The most common types of sites were bars, cafés, and restaurants and streets (Figure 3). Alcohol was consumed at the majority of sites. Other popular activities included dining, listening to music, and dancing.

Site visitor characteristics

Many respondents reported that site visitors lived within a ten-minute walk, visited the site at least once a week, were students, and/or consumed alcohol at the site. Respondents at 63% of sites reported that men met new female sexual partners at the site of interview. Twenty-seven percent reported that sex workers solicited clients. Less than 5% reported that men met new male (gay) sexual partners.

Figure 3. Type of Site



Injection drug use

Slightly over half (53%) of the respondents thought that injection drug use was “very common” or “somewhat common” in the area. Only 10% thought that injection drug use did not occur in the area. Fifty percent of the respondents reported that injection drug users socialized at the site. Forty-four percent said that they had seen used syringes at the site during the three months prior to the interview. Interviewers saw used syringes at 14% of the sites.

HIV prevention activities

Site-based AIDS prevention activities were rare (Figure 4). Only 11% of respondents reported that HIV prevention activities had ever occurred at the site. HIV posters and brochures were displayed at only 1% of the sites. Almost 56% of respondents were willing to have HIV educational programs at their sites.

Interviewers saw condoms at only 16% of the sites (Figure 5). Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents reported that condoms were not available on the day of interview, and 65% reported that condoms had never been available during the twelve months preceding the interview. Over 42% of respondents were willing to sell condoms at their site. Eighty-eight percent said that it was possible for someone to find a condom within 10 minutes of leaving the site at night.

Figure 4. AIDS Educational Activities at all Sites

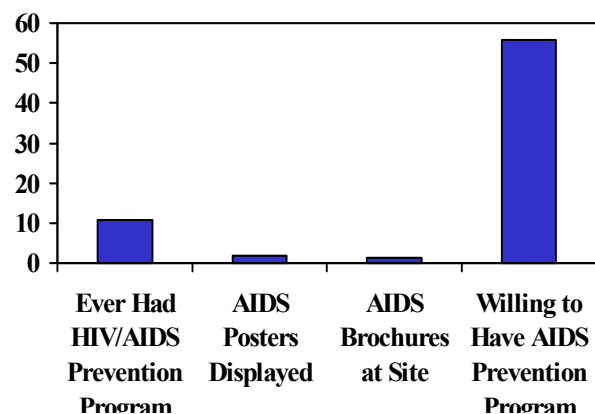
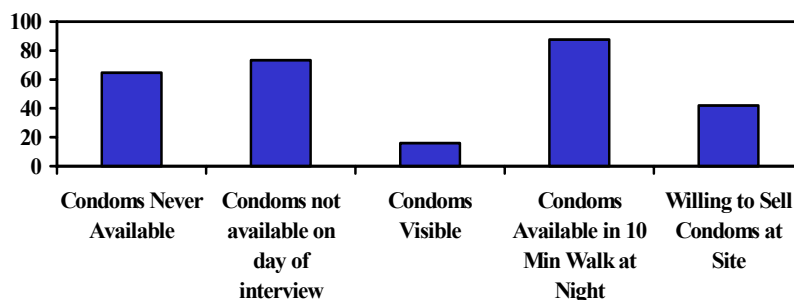


Figure 5. Condom availability at all Sites



Step 4: Interviews with people socializing at sites

A. Objective

The objective of this step was to describe the demographic, social, and behavioral characteristics of site visitors.

B. Methods

Interviews were conducted with people socializing at a random sample of sites that had been visited in the units identified by focus groups. In addition, interviews were conducted at sites named by 15 or more key informants but not selected in the random sample. These sites were considered important potential intervention sites.

An interview team visited each site and selected a sample of people to interview. The goal was to interview 2,100 people in total, including 200 injection drug users and 200 commercial sex workers. Ten people were interviewed at small sites, 20 people at medium-sized sites, and 30 people at large sites. Interviewers tried to obtain a representative sample at a site by using the following strategies:

- Not approaching more than one person from a group of people socializing together;
- Numbering the people at a site and identifying potential respondents using numeric intervals;
- Approaching individuals at different locations within a site.

C. Results

Interviews were conducted at one-quarter of the sites that were visited (Table 2). It took 21 interviewers 19 days to complete the interviews. The target number of interviews was obtained, but oversampling of injection drug users was necessary to reach the target for this group. Results are reported separately for the representative sample and three high-risk groups: youth, commercial sex workers and their clients, and injection drug users.

Table 2. Summary of Individual Interviews Field Work

Number of Sites Visited for Individual Interviews	109	
% of Verified Sites Visited	24.8%	
Number of Days of Interviews	19	
Number of Interviewers	21	
<i>Numbers Interviewed</i>	M	W
Total	1202	898
Representative Sample	1109	889
Youth	607	559
CSWs and Clients	282	187
IDUs	236	27

Part 1: Representative Sample of People Socializing at All Sites

The representative sample includes everyone interviewed except for the injection drug users that were added later to reach the target for this risk group.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Slightly more than half of the people interviewed were men. The average age of male visitors (27.1 years) was higher than that of females (25.6 years). Over 90% of men and 95% of

women were residents of Almaty, and about 44% of men and women had lived in Almaty for their entire lives. Men were slightly more likely than women to be married (35% vs. 30%), employed full-time (55% vs. 43%), and to have slept outside the city in the past three months (38% vs. 26%). Similar proportions of men and women had higher education (51%) or were currently students (30%).

Social and Sexual Behavior

Many men and women reported that they visited the site of interview on a regular basis; about 30% of respondents said that they came every day. Almost three-quarters of men and women believed that people came to the interview site to meet a new sexual partner. In fact, 27% of men and 30% of women said that they had personally met a new sexual partner at the site.

Large proportions of men (88%) and women (79%) had had at least one sexual partner in the four weeks prior to the interview. More men (43%) than women (32%) had had at least one new sexual partner during the same period. Approximately one-quarter of men reported giving money in exchange for sex during the past 3 months. The proportion of women who had received money in exchange for sex was 21%.

Three-quarters of men (74%) and two-thirds of women (68%) reported that they had had a regular sexual partner during the 12 months prior to the interview. Of these, significant proportions of men (67%) and women (45%) reported that they had had at least one new partner in addition to their regular partner during this period.

Men rarely reported having sex with another man during the four weeks prior to the interview (1%).

Condom Use

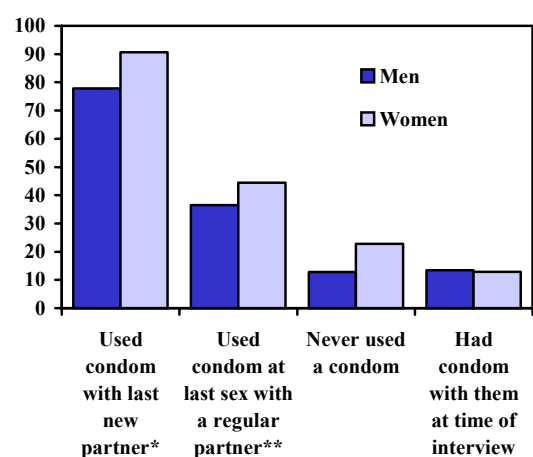
Most men (87%) and women (77%) said that they had used a condom. Most men (79%) and women (91%) who had had a new partner in the last four weeks reported using a condom with their last new partner (Figure 6). Modest proportions of men (36%) and women (44%) who had a regular partner reported using a condom during the last sexual act with that partner. Approximately 13% of men and women had a condom with them at the time of the interview.

Men most frequently reported obtaining condoms from pharmacies and kiosks. Women reported that they obtained condoms from pharmacies or from their partners.

HIV Knowledge

Approximately 16% of men and 23% of women had attended an HIV educational session in the 12 months prior to the interview. Over 90% of men and women knew that HIV can be transmitted by sharing needles or by sexual contact without a condom. However, only 80% of men and women identified condom use as a way to reduce their personal risk of HIV infection.

Figure 6. Condom use by gender



*Among individuals with at least 1 new partner in past 4 weeks

**Among individuals with a regular partner

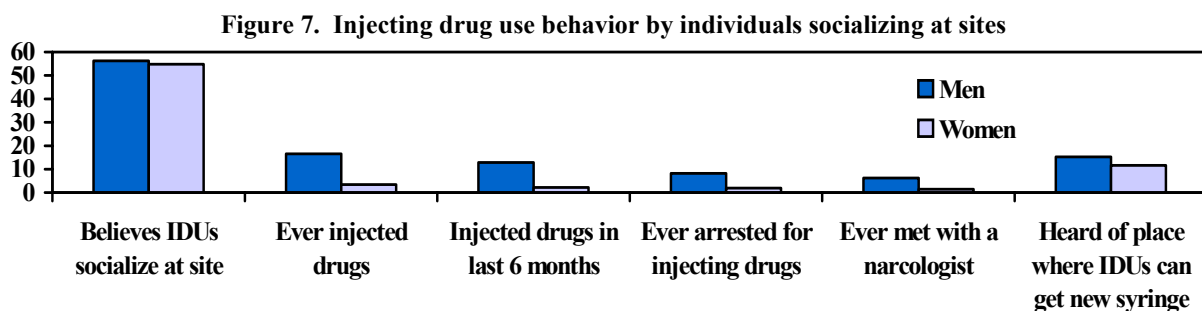
Only 41% of men and 31% of women knew that using sterile needles is another way to prevent infection. Approximately three-quarters of men and women knew that a person who looks healthy can be infected with HIV.

Over half of the men and women interviewed had been tested for HIV in the 12 months prior to the interview. Only about half of those tested had done so voluntarily.

Injection drug use

Approximately 44% of men and women reported that injection drug use was “very common” or “somewhat common” in the unit where they were interviewed. Less than 5% of respondents thought that drug use did not occur in the unit. About 20% said that they did not know. Over half of the men and women thought that injection drug users socialized at the interview site (Figure 7).

Approximately 17% of men reported that they had ever injected drugs, while only 4% of women had done so. Of these, over 75% of men and 66% of women had used injection drugs during the past six months. Eight percent of men and 2% of women had been arrested for drug use. Less than 15% of respondents had heard of a place in the city where injection drug users could get new syringes.



Part 2: Youth

Youth aged 18 to 25 years were examined as a separate group. Almost 55% of men and 63% of women in the representative sample were youth. Results that differed from the representative sample are emphasized here.

Youth: Sociodemographic Characteristics

Nine percent of male youth and 12% of female youth were married. Only 38% of men and 34% of women were employed full-time. Over half of the men (51%) and 44% of women were currently students.

Youth: Social and Sexual Behavior

Most male (76%) and female (81%) youth believed that people came to the site to meet new sexual partners. One-third of male (33%) and female (37%) youth had personally met a new partner at the site. Large proportions of male (49%) and female (38%) youth reported that they had had a new sexual partner in the 4 weeks preceding the interview. Only 63% of male youth and 57% of female youth said that they had had a regular sex partner in the past 12 months.

Almost one-quarter of male youth had given money in exchange for sex in the 3 months prior to the interview. A similar proportion (26%) of female youth said that they had received money in exchange for sex during the same period.

Only 1% of male youth reported having sex with another man in the four weeks preceding the interview.

Youth: HIV Knowledge and Prevention

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of male youth and 29% of female youth had attended an AIDS education session during the three months prior to the interview. Nearly all youth were aware that unprotected sex and needle sharing were risk factors for HIV transmission. Smaller proportions identified using condoms and avoiding needle sharing as ways to reduce personal risk. Most youth had used condoms with their last new sexual partner. Smaller proportions had used condoms with their last regular sexual partners.

Youth: Injection drug use

Over half of the male and female respondents thought that injection drug users socialized at the interview site. Male youth (18%) were much more likely than female youth (2%) to report that they had ever used injection drugs. Among those who had ever injected drugs, 86% of male youth and 31% of female youth had done so in the past 6 months.

Part 3: Commercial Sex Workers and Clients

Commercial sex workers were defined as women who reported receiving money in exchange for sex in the 3 months prior to the interview. Clients were defined as men who reported giving money or other gifts in exchange for sexual services during the same period. Approximately 21% of the women in the representative sample were commercial sex workers and 25% of the men were clients. Results that differed from the representative sample are emphasized here.

CSWs and Clients: Sociodemographic Characteristics

The majority of CSWs were under the age of 25 and only 7% were married. One-quarter reported that they were employed full-time; 23% reported that they were unemployed and looking for work. Less than 15% were currently students and approximately half had completed high school. The average CSW was 23 years old, while the average client was 27 years. Only 27% of the clients were married.

Clients and CSWs: Social and Sexual Behavior

Almost 85% of clients and over 96% of CSWs thought that people came to the interview site to meet new sexual partners. In fact, almost half of the clients (45%) and nearly all of the CSWs (95%) had met a new sexual partner at the site. The majority of CSWs visited the site of interview more than once a week. Most CSWs went to only one or two sites to solicit clients.

Approximately 85% of CSWs had 4 or more new sexual partners in the 4 weeks preceding the interview. Over 96% had had 15 or more new partners during the past 12 months. About half of the CSWs interviewed said that they had a regular sexual partner.

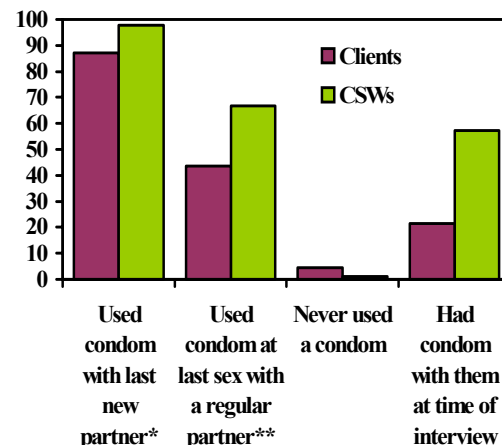
Seventy percent of the clients reported that they had had a new partner in the 4 weeks prior to the interview, and 70% had had 4 or more new partners in the past 12 months. Two percent of clients reported that they had recently had sex with another man.

CSWs and Clients: Condom use

Condom use was high among CSWs and their clients (Figure 8). Less than 5% of clients had never used a condom. A large proportion (87%) of clients who had a new partner in the past 4 weeks used a condom with the last new partner. Less than half (44%) of clients with regular partners reported using a condom at last sex with that partner.

Only 1% of CSWs had never used a condom. Approximately 98% had used a condom with their last new partner. Approximately two-thirds also used a condom at last sex with a regular partner. Approximately 22% of clients and 57% of CSWs had a condom at the time of the interview. CSWs were not likely to depend on their partners to provide condoms.

Figure 8. Condom use by CSWs and clients



CSWs and Clients: HIV Knowledge

Slightly less than one-fifth of CSWs and clients had attended an HIV education session in the 3 months prior to the interview. Large proportions of CSWs (94%) and clients (88%) knew that condom use is a way to reduce the risk of getting HIV. Approximately 83% of CSWs had been tested for HIV in the past 12 months. Almost two-thirds (63%) had done so voluntarily. About half of the clients (53%) had been tested.

Clients and CSWs: Injection Drug Use

Three-quarters of CSWs thought that injection drug users socialized at the interview site, while only 63% of clients did. Approximately 22% of clients said that they had ever used injection drugs; of these, 68% had done so in the past six months. Approximately 12% of CSWs reported that they had used injected drugs. Of CSWs who had ever injected drugs, 70% had done so within the past 6 months.

Part 4: Injection Drug Users

An IDU was defined as someone who reported that they had used injection drugs in the 6 months preceding the interview. Ninety percent of the IDUs interviewed were men. Because only 27 female IDUs were interviewed, much of the analysis will be restricted to male IDUs. Results that differed from the representative sample are emphasized here.

IDUs: Sociodemographic Characteristics

The average age of male IDUs was 24.5 years. Only 14% of male IDUs were married, and less than 15% were employed full-time. Approximately 20% were students and 20% had at least some higher education.

IDUs: Social and Sexual Behavior

Over 85% of male IDUs visited the site of interview at least once a week. Most male (67%) and female (80%) IDUs thought that people came to the site to meet new sexual partners. In fact, 35% of male IDUs and 63% of female IDUs had met a new partner at the site. Approximately 79% of male IDUs had at least one sexual partner in the past 4 weeks; of these, 54% had at least one new partner during this period. Two-thirds of male IDUs had a regular sex partner. Approximately 18% of male IDUs paid for sex during the 3 months prior to the interview. Almost 60% of the 27 female IDUs interviewed said they had received money in exchange for sex during the past 3 months. Few (2%) male IDUs reported recent sex with another man.

IDUs: HIV Knowledge and Prevention

Less than 10% of male IDUs attended an AIDS educational session in the past year. Male IDUs were likely to identify using sterile needles as a way to reduce the risk of getting HIV. Seventy percent of the male IDUs with a new partner in the past 4 weeks used a condom with the last new partner. Approximately 34% of male IDUs with a regular partner used a condom at last sex with that. Fifty-nine percent of male IDUs had been tested for HIV in the past year.

IDUs: Injection Drug Use

Most male IDUs (84%) said that injection drug use was “very common” or “somewhat common” in the unit where the interview took place. No male IDUs reported that injection drug use did not occur in the unit. Almost 98% thought that other IDUs socialized at the interview site.

Heroin was the most commonly reported drug. Most had used drugs for years; only 15% reported injecting for less than one year. Almost half of male IDUs reported always taking drugs with the same group; 24% did it alone.

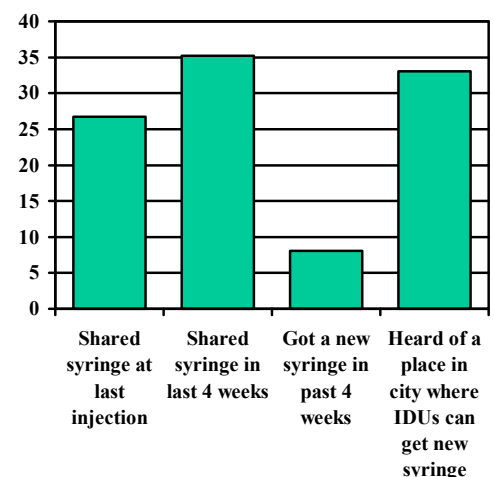
Over 80% of male IDUs had injected drugs in the previous 7 days; about 70% the day before. Those who injected the previous day did so 1.8 times, on average.

In the 4 weeks preceding the interview, nearly three-quarters (73%) of male IDUs took drugs from a common reservoir, and 69% used a ready made drug solution without boiling. Over one-quarter of male IDUs shared a syringe at last injection, and 35% had shared a syringe in the past 4 weeks (Figure 9). Only 8% of male IDUs had obtained a new syringe in the last 4 weeks. One-third had heard of a place in the city where IDUs can get new syringes. The majority of male IDUs (80%) said that they had obtained their last syringe from a pharmacy. Three-quarters said that they could always get a new syringe whenever they wanted. Male IDUs frequently cited a lack of money and fear of police as obstacles to obtaining new syringes.

IDUs: Arrests and registration

Over 40% of male IDUs had been arrested for injecting drugs. Of these, 71% thought they had been registered with the police and 66% of these thought they were registered as IDUs. Almost one-third of male IDUs had met a narcologist or visited a narcologist dispensary.

Figure 9. Needle sharing and use by male IDUs



Step 5: Summary and Recommendations

Sexual and injection drug use networks are extensive and diffuse. There is significant overlap among groups at high risk for HIV infection.

This study identified over 850 unique sites in Almaty where people at high risk of HIV infection socialize. There was significant overlap among groups at high risk, including youth, injection drug users, and commercial sex workers and their clients.

The rate of new partnership formation is high. A large proportion of men visit sex workers.

Over 40% of men and one-third of women interviewed at sites reported at least one new partner during the past 4 weeks. Approximately one-quarter of men had given money in exchange for sex during the 3 months prior to the interview.

Condom use is high, particularly with new partners.

Condom use was high among all sub-populations. The proportion of individuals who had ever used a condom ranged from 76% of female youth to 99% of sex workers. Over three-quarters of people with a new partner in the past 4 weeks had used a condom with the last new partner.

Condoms are not consistently available at sites, but they are available nearby.

Less than 30% of sites had condoms always available. However, condoms were available nearby at 88% of sites. Approximately 42% of site representatives were willing to sell condoms at their sites.

Pharmacies are the most common place to obtain condoms and syringes.

Most men and women obtained condoms from pharmacies. Men also frequently obtained condoms from kiosks. Women often obtained condoms from their sex partners. Over 80% of IDUs obtained syringes from pharmacies.

Male IDUs inject drugs frequently and often share needles.

Over 80% of male IDUs had injected drugs in the past 7 days. Over one-third had shared a syringe in the 4 weeks preceding the interview.

Recommendations

- HIV interventions should be implemented at sites where people at high risk of infection socialize, particularly at sites where these high risk populations overlap.
- Condoms should be available at sites where people meet new sexual partners.
- More publicity is needed about places where IDUs can get a clean syringe in the city.
- Current programs promoting condom use need to be maintained.
- Follow-up studies should determine the role of public transportation in sexual and drug use networks.